

Multi-cultural Ministry Newsletter

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Working towards integration of people groups within Mennonite congregations and cooperation among people of different ethnic, social, national, political and religious backgrounds.

From the director – Samson Lo

This is our last newsletter before the end of 2004. As I am writing this message I have just arrived back in Vancouver from my trip to Hong Kong.



Hong Kong

I departed on November 8 with two purposes in mind, one was to liaise with China Alliance Press HK to explore and hopefully to confirm engaging them as the publisher for the Chinese version of *Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*. Other than meeting for discus-

sions with their President David Hui I also took a tour of their facilities and the various operating departments. I was invited to share about our Mennonite ministries both in Canada and Hong Kong at one of their morning prayer sessions. It was my pleasure to be accompanied and assisted in this by our Hong Kong colleague Jeremiah Choi, to whom I extend my heartfelt thanks.

My second purpose was to liaise with our co-workers in the Hong Kong area, to carry on face-to-face discussions on plans for our Canada-Hong Kong cultural exchange and ministry sharing tour. After several discussions we finally reached consensus on the long-term significance and goals of this tour. All who took part expressed a willingness to work towards making this a reality.

What I have in mind for the year to come is to form a small group of representatives, both adults and young people, from Chinese churches in various areas in Canada, to travel to Hong Kong and Macau under the banner of cultural exchange, to hold seminars and sharing sessions with local Mennonite Churches there. If possible, maybe even to work together in some form of short-term outreach ministry or training. This cultural exchange and learning tour, at its actual planning and implementation stage, will involve other Witness staff as well, with whom I already had general consultations.

During my brief stay in Hong Kong I was invited to speak at the Sunday services of two different Mennonite churches – Agape Mennonite Church and Grace Mennonite Church. I

took this opportunity to share with these brothers and sisters about the ministries of MC Canada and the multi-cultural program in Canada. They all expressed a keen interest, since a good majority of them had either lived or studied in Canada. There was a special feeling of closeness and some of them stayed behind after the services for further fellowship with me. The three pastor co-workers, Jeremiah Choi, Alde Wong and Simon Sze Du, as well as Ruth Mak, secretary for MC Hong Kong, were very warm and enthusiastic in giving me a very detailed presentation and explanation of the various ministries in Hong Kong.



David Hui, President of China Alliance Press HK & Jeremiah Choi, pastor of Agape MC with Samson Lo in Hong Kong.

Macau

I also traveled to Macau to visit the new site of the Mennonite Centre for Family Services, which provides facilities and services to the needy in all age groups and socio-economic classes in the community.

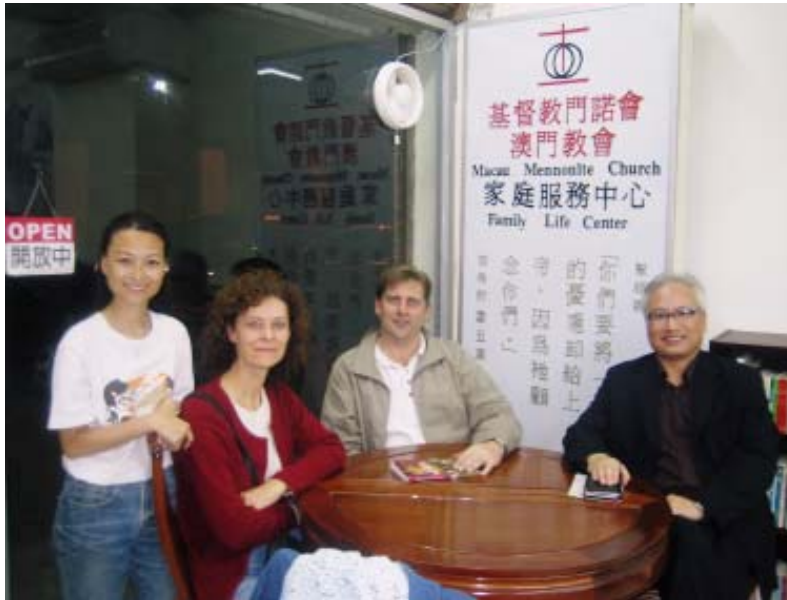
While on this Macau visit I also took the opportunity to fellowship with Tim and Cindy Buhler, Macau based mission

workers commissioned by MC Canada Witness. Together with Crystal Lee, a sister sent by Mennonite Church Hong Kong to assist, they are involved in pioneer ministry, church planning and discipleship training. (of course we should not forget to mention George and Tobia Veith, who are on furlough in Canada).

In our sharing I learnt that Macau is experiencing an economic boom of sorts, while at the same time also facing a hidden crisis with the recent deregulation of gaming rights, which leads to the opening up of a large number of new casinos. This not only encourages gambling among the population, but also results in many young people joining the gambling industry, as it pays relatively better than other industries. Some students even quit school to work in the casinos. This certainly calls for our concern and prayers.

Looking back on this two-week trip to Hong Kong and Macau, I really want to give thanks to God for His keeping and blessing: despite my poor health and lack of energy I managed to basically complete what I had set out to accomplish, and was still able to hold various meaningful discussions and sharing with co-workers and believers. This is my greatest joy. I am sure your support and prayers were not the least among what gave me the strength to carry on.

Here I should backtrack to October 21-24 when MC Canada Witness and MC USA Mission Network held their joint council meetings in Surrey, B.C. I was privileged to be invited to conduct one of the morning devotion sessions. I shared



Crystal Lee, Cindy & Tim Buhler with Samson Lo at Mennonite Church Macau

two hymns and a message based on II Corinthians 4:1 with the participants and we prayed together. Thanks to God for touching those who took part; I received very positive feedback from quite a few people. In the evening of the 24th I took part in the ministry sharing/ fundraising meeting held at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond BC. Besides sharing with different people, I also had the opportunity to give a brief presentation on the ministry of the Multi-cultural Office and the progress on the Chinese version of *Confession of Faith*.

With the conclusion of the Hong Kong trip we enter into preparations for the celebration of Christmas. As crowds busy themselves getting ready for various programs and gifts-buying, I sincerely wish that the mission of Christ's birth will once again touch our hearts and awaken us to the world's need for the precious good tidings of Emmanuel – God among men. May more friends from different cultures and traditions learn about and experience the good tidings of Christmas – love and peace – through our multi-cultural ministry!

Looking forward to the year to come, we must continue to face hardship and difficulty hand in hand and share the delightful and fulfilling fruits of our ministry. Even though we are located at different places, may God's love bind and hold us together!

Sharing & prayer concerns

(h i g h l i g h t s f r o m a c r o s s t h e c o u n t r y)

New Workers

In August 2004, the Hispanic pastor in Winnipeg, **Omar Maldonado**, was jointly commissioned by his own congregation, Iglesia Jesus es el Camino and Mennonite Church Manitoba. It was certainly a most blessed event.

Michael Kong was installed as pastor of Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church on November 7, 2004. The installation was officiated by Jim Shantz, Conference Minister of MC Alberta.

John Wang, pastor of Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church, Manitoba shared that two church members responded to

God's call to full-time ministry by attending theological studies in Providence Biblical Seminary, Providence MB. They are Albert Cheung who is pursuing a Master of Divinity Degree and Marjorie Lee who is studying Biblical Counseling. Meanwhile, Ming Yuan Liu, another church member, is also in the course of seeking an opportunity to pursue postgraduate study in one of our Mennonite seminaries in the hope of preparing himself to serve God in China. For this we give thanks to God and pray for these people whose hearts are set to share Christ with others in full-time ministry in the not too distant future.

New Ministries

- A Korean Sunday service was started at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver BC in September 2004 with the help of Hun Lee.
- Chinda Kommala shares, 'I and a few families have now started a new church in Toronto — Lao-Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church... please pray for us. We hold the worship service every Sunday from 10-12 noon. We are targeting many Laotians, Thais and other nationals who live in the Greater Toronto Area. We have announced our service through Toronto Lao Radio, and will post our announcements at various locations, such as Lao Association, Lao Chinese Association and at all Lao grocery stores in the GTA. We will also publish a mini pamphlet for distributing in the GTA to invite people to be nearer to God and accept Him as their personal Savior.

"Lao-Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Church" is an MCEC affiliate. The group was started on September 5th this year in my home and a month later we moved into 3625 Weston Rd. Unit 3, Toronto, where Toronto United Laotian Mennonite Church used to be. Currently we have a part time pastor to assist us. After the New Year we will offer to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) and Lao language to all for free. We also offer help for Lao translation service for legal, immigration and others as needed. We have Sunday school. We have been visiting and offering rides for people to come to church. We are a very tiny in size but with a big plan/task ahead of us. It's very hard work but it's the work that all Christians have to carry.

- Page 23 of the MCCBC Annual Report Book 2004 reports a "Continued development of the 'partnership' with Grace Chinese Mennonite Church (GCMC) as the host for Praxis." Praxis Project is part of MCCBC Youth Services which provides education and promotes opportunities for people to explore responses to social justice issues. There were altogether 11 groups and over 100 people who used the facilities and stayed at GCMC through their participation in this project this year. Praxis Project set up office on the premises of GCMC as of November of this year.

Cross-cultural Get Together in B.C.

In September, Agnes Ong & Stanley Koh, a couple from Singapore Mennonite Church visited British Columbia and took this opportunity to share with pastors at a Vancouver Mennonite Ministerial Lunch Meeting which is normally held once a month. They also attended a Sunday service at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond BC and a Saturday evening meeting at Iglesia Centro De Fe Y Esperanza, Vancouver, where two members from Grace Chinese Mennonite Church in Vancouver joined them and shared in the special and joyful occasion.

Multi-cultural Publications

Sheldon Sawatzky, Director for East Asia, Mennonite Mission Network writes, "The Chinese translation of *From Anabaptist Seed* is currently in the final editing stage, and the book cover needs to be designed. It was translated by Paulus Pan and will be printed and published by FOMCIT (Fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Taiwan). A deadline for the publication has not been established."

As stated in the last newsletter, translation, editing and proofreading of the Chinese version of Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective has been completed. In order to maximize the network of distribution, I made a special effort to engage in negotiations with China Alliance Press HK while I was in Hong Kong and had some very fruitful discussions and exchange of views. They agreed to act as our agent for this publication, however, as they still have a lot of outstanding projects they have not been able to commit to a specific date of publication. I stressed to them that we needed to have it completed as soon as possible, so that the book could become available to Chinese Mennonites as well as members of other denominations all over the world, to give them a better understanding of our faith, and ultimately to achieve the goal of mutual learning and exchange. We need your support and prayers.

An Eye Opening Trip

Seng Sengsavanh, a member of Grace Chinese Mennonite Church and chair of the Reference Council for the church planting project of Iglesia Centro De Fe Y Esperanza, Vancouver BC, writes of his enriching experience in Peru:

"My two-week trip to Peru in August took me through several cities where I met some of the nicest and most helpful people I've ever met. My friend and I started our trip in the capital city of Lima before heading to Arequipa, Chivay, Puno and Cusco where we visited Manchu Pichu. Besides walking around the citadels of Manchu Pichu, my other trip highlights are visiting the floating reed islands of the coast of Puno, visiting the many museums and taking pictures of the locals and of the colorfully dressed children. I was quite struck by the poverty in some of the towns and cities that we visited. Yet, I noticed that the people of Peru appreciate and take joy in what they have and they don't seem to worry much about the things that they don't have.

The food was interesting for a lack of better words. I didn't feel too adventurous about trying new dishes so I stuck to what I was familiar with. We ended up eating rotisserie chicken and yellow potato fries most of the time. We had friends who live in Lima and they helped us plan our whole trip and we couldn't have done the things we did and see the places we saw if it wasn't for their help along with their aunt who gave us contacts along the way and in every city we visited.

The last thing I did on my trip before heading to the airport was attending a service at our friend's church. They told me that their church is going through a revival and as we arrived at the church I saw people, most of them youths, lining up around the block, waiting to get in. The whole worship service was really good and at the end of the service, the pastor made an altar call and about 50-60 people came forward to receive Christ and to be prayed for. What an amazing scene!!! The spirit of God is really moving across Peru!

I'll never forget the lessons I've learned and the people I met. Peru is a wonderful place full of color, life and culture."

GOOD NEWS! You may now have access to back issues of Multi-cultural Ministry Newsletter by going to www.mennonitechurch.ca/news/multi-cultural